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United Nations

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

11 July 2013

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Sixty-eighth Session
Supplement No. 29

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Chapter I
Introduction

1. By its resolution 66/22, the General Assembly, having taken note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean (A/66/29), requested the Chair of the Committee to continue his informal consultations with the members of the Committee and to report through the Committee to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Committee held its formal session (455th meeting) on 11 July 2013 at United Nations Headquarters. The Chair also held a number of consultations and meetings during 2013.

3. At the 455th meeting, the following delegation made a statement in the general discussion under agenda item 4: Australia.

4. The Committee is composed of the following States:

(a) 43 members:

Australia
Bangladesh
Bulgaria
Canada
China
Djibouti
Egypt
Ethiopia
Germany
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Italy
Japan
Kenya
Liberia
Madagascar
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Mozambique
Netherlands
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Poland
Romania
Russian Federation
Seychelles
Singapore
Somalia
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Thailand
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
United Republic of Tanzania
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

(b) Observers:

Nepal

South Africa

Sweden

5. Following elections to fill vacancies in the Bureau, the officers of the Committee were as follows:

Chair:

Palitha T. B. Kohona (Sri Lanka)

Vice-Chairs:

Emily Street (Australia)
Ary Aprianto (Indonesia)
Bernardo Serage (Mozambique)

Rapporteur:

Héléna Bernadette Rajaonarivelo (Madagascar)

Chapter II
Work of the Committee in 2013

A. Adoption of the agenda

6. At its 45th meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document A/AC.159/L.143, which read as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 66/22.
5. Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.
6. Other matters.

B. Report of the Chair

7. At its 455th meeting, the Committee considered agenda item 4, concerning the report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 66/22. The Chair made the following comprehensive statement on his consultations:

> "In 1971, the States and peoples of the Indian Ocean region came together to preserve their regional interests for mutual benefit. The General Assembly declared the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace in resolution 2832 (XXVI). A year later, in resolution 2992 (XXVII), the Assembly implemented practical measures to further the objectives of the 1971 Declaration by establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. The Declaration obliged the Committee, inter alia, to consult the great Powers in order to abstain from further military expansion in the Indian Ocean.
>
> "Over the years since the adoption of the Declaration, the situation in the Indian Ocean has transformed significantly. The Cold War super-Power rivalry has ceased and socioeconomic development within the region has flourished. The economic and military clout of the regional countries has increased substantially. Initiatives such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation have begun to blossom and have an impact on the region and have fostered myriad economic and security partnerships.
>
> "New threats have emerged: terrorism and piracy challenge regional stability, threaten security and impose far-reaching economic costs. Nevertheless, these challenges, although new, endanger the same interests that the 1971 Declaration aspired to protect. Geographical proximity and shared challenges among the Committee members give rise to economic, political and social commonalities. Thus, the original mandate of the Committee remains pertinent to ensure regional peace, security and economic growth.

"Three important areas that pose common challenges are energy resources, climate change and piracy. The promise of collaboration for mutual benefit in the area of energy production is tantalizing. Many energy producers are from the Indian Ocean region. The Committee may be used to foster new partnerships in energy for Indian Ocean States.

"Partnerships in energy consumption may yield further mutual security benefits for States. The likely increase in energy demand in India, China and elsewhere in the region acts as a considerable opportunity for energy producers.

"Cooperation in environmental issues would substantially affect related challenges. Since close to 40 per cent of Asia's roughly 4 billion inhabitants live within 100 km of the coast, climate change is likely to affect their lives and security. Broader environmental issues will have an impact on the management of coastal marine systems and freshwater resources. The prospect of environmental refugees fleeing natural disasters looms as an emerging problem.

"Sea temperatures in the Indian Ocean are rising faster than anywhere else in the world. More severe weather patterns and swelling sea levels threaten the very existence of communities in low-lying areas, such as Maldives. By 2050, 40 per cent of Bangladesh's land area will be affected by sea-level rise. The warming of the ocean is likely to seriously affect fish habitats, which will affect the livelihoods of millions of fishermen.

"Piracy is a pressing issue that warrants collaboration among Indian Ocean States. Although a coalition of world navies seeks to protect the Gulf of Aden region, in 2011, pirates staged 439 violent attacks and held 802 crew members hostage across the globe. The extensive reach of piracy forces vessels to travel around the Cape of Good Hope rather than through the Suez Canal, incurring costly security measures and insurance fees. Notably, the majority of piracy incidents reported in the Indian Ocean region occurred while ships were at anchor. Piracy, of course, has its roots on land and economic circumstances.

"The Committee notes the improved intelligence gathering and sharing, and the assistance from private security agencies, both on land and at sea. Such efforts likely helped to curb the number of piracy attacks to a five-year low of 297 in 2012. In the long term, piracy can be addressed only by a comprehensive, multilayered approach that involves political, military and societal measures.

"The Committee is suited to addressing the myriad security issues in a broader sense involving all interrelated aspects. Further definition of its scope and focus will determine the relevance and sustainability of its solutions. With time and adequate resources, the Committee can serve as a vital political, economic and social strategic forum."

8. During the meeting, an exchange of views was held on, among other things, the work of the Committee.

9. The Committee reaffirmed the conclusions that it had reached during its 1994, 1995 and 1996 sessions and emphasized the need to foster consensual, step-by-step approaches, particularly given the propitious international climate, which was conducive to the pursuit of such endeavours. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.